



American Dramatists Series

Some People Marry

Robert A. Kasper

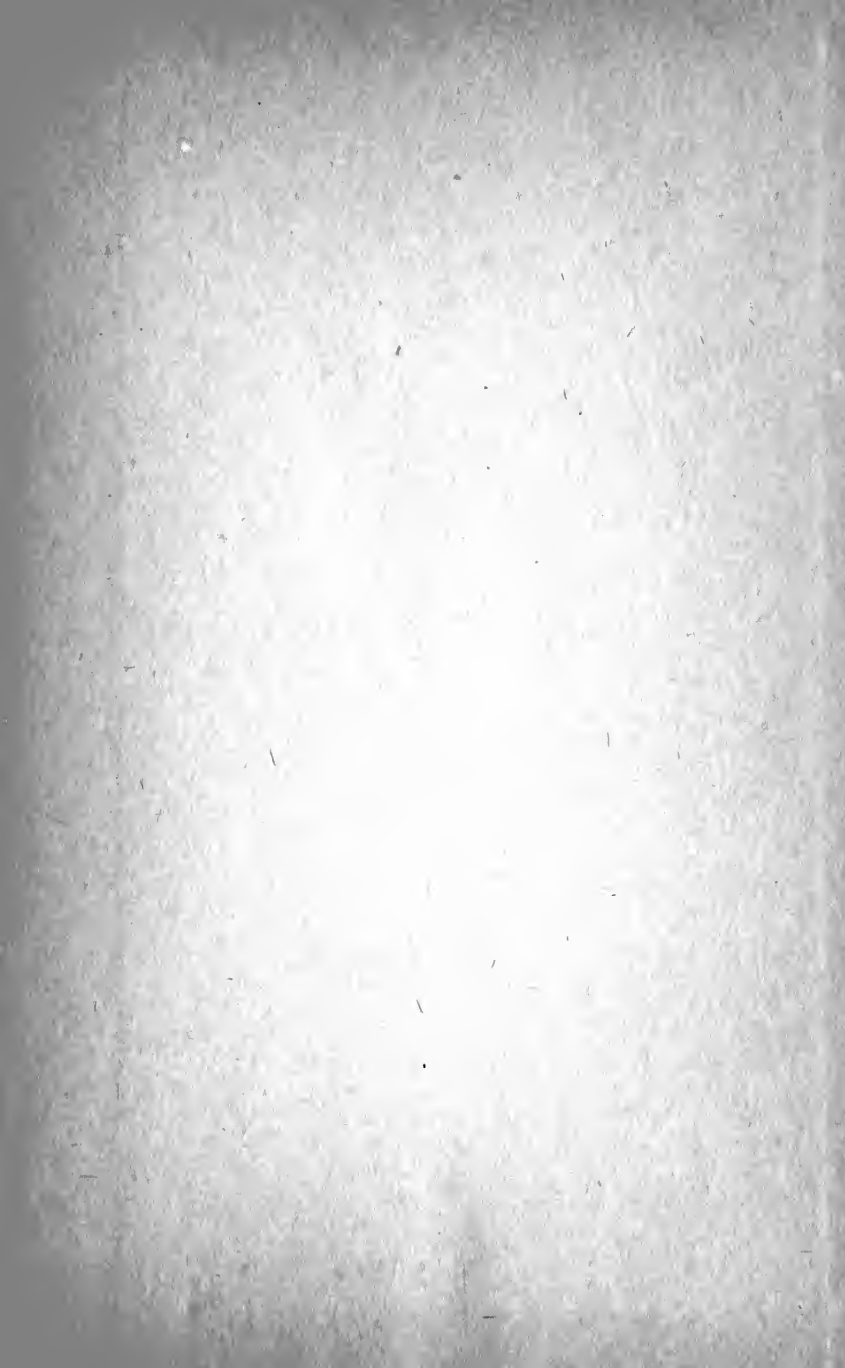


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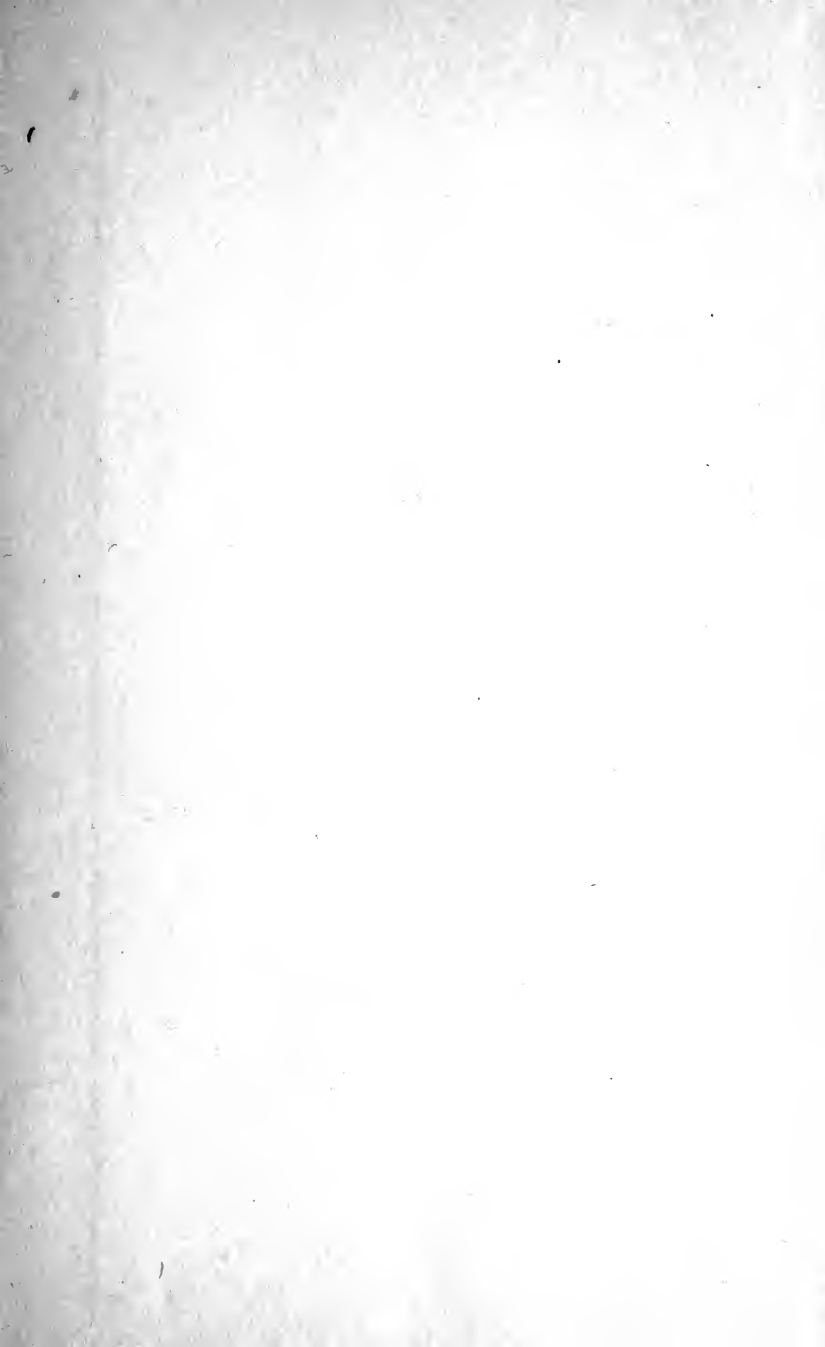
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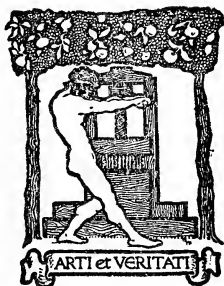
American Dramatists Series

SOME PEOPLE MARRY

A Play in Three Acts

ROBERT A. KASPER

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN YOU LOVE"



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*To
Frederick, William and Simeon Kasper
With all brotherly affection
I dedicate this play*

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

OLIVER MARLOWE.

MARY MARLOWE, *his wife.*

DANIEL MARLOWE, *their son.*

DOCTOR JAMES CORNELL.

ETHEL CORNELL, *his daughter.*

"BUD" MEARS.

ACT I.

Parlor in the Marlowe home.

ACT II.

Library in the Cornell home.

ACT III.

Same as Act I.

SETTING:

The action of the play occurs upon the evening of the birthday of Daniel Marlowe.

Door right, leading into the dining room; door left, leading into the library; door center, leading into the hall. Other accessories, such as tables, davenport, chairs, etc., set about the room.

SOME PEOPLE MARRY

ACT I.

Parlor in the Marlowe home.

(The curtain rises upon an empty stage. Immediately Oliver Marlowe, a man of fifty-two years of age, enters door right. He crosses to mantel left and takes down a box of cigars. He turns to recross as his wife, Mary Marlowe, enters door right. Mrs. Marlowe is fifty years of age. She is very excited and looks nervously back to door right to make sure no one is coming.)

MARLOWE.

You shouldn't have left them.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Excitedly.)

I had to see you, to talk to you alone. What shall we do?

MARLOWE.

Simply keep on pretending nothing ever happened. Now hurry back.

(Crosses with box of cigars to center of stage.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

Yes, yes! But suppose the doctor recognizes me?

MARLOWE.

Don't be silly. He's been here almost two hours and hasn't recognized you yet.

MRS. MARLOWE.

But he suspects! You know that!

MARLOWE.

(Impatiently.)

For goodness' sakes, don't be looking for trouble.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Oh, I'm not; but I'm so worried!

MARLOWE.

(Crosses to his wife and puts his hand tenderly upon her shoulder.)

I don't blame you, dear. It's hard, I know. But the best thing you can do is forget you ever saw the doctor before to-night. Do that. Please.

(Pats her gently upon the back.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

I'll try, I'll try.

MARLOWE.

You've done remarkably well so far, but you should cheer up a bit. Put on a bold front. Act happy and gay. Then if the doctor does recognize you, you will be in a fine position to talk him out of it.

MRS. MARLOWE.

I'll do my best, my very best.

MARLOWE.

That's a brave girl.

(Regards Mrs. Marlowe tenderly as she exits right.)

(A pause, during which Marlowe takes several cigars from the box he holds and places them in a glass on the center table. He crosses and puts the box back on the mantel.)

(In a moment, Mrs. Marlowe is heard to laugh off stage right. Marlowe looks toward door right and shows great pleasure when he hears his wife's laugh.)

(Mrs. Marlowe and Doctor Cornell enter right. Doctor Cornell is fifty years of age.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

(To Doctor Cornell as they enter.)

Doctor, you're an old flatterer.

(Daniel Marlowe and Ethel Cornell enter right. Their ages are twenty-eight and twenty-six years respectively.)

DR. CORNELL.

(To Mrs. Marlowe.)

I'm sincere. It was a most sumptuous dinner.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Pleased.)

Thank you. I am very glad you enjoyed it.

MARLOWE.

(Proudly.)

She planned and prepared it all herself, doctor.

DR. CORNELL.

So I understand. I should walk miles for such dinners.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Pleased.)

Really!

(Then disappointedly.)

But Daniel has invited you so often and this is the first time you have come.

DR. CORNELL.

To think I have deprived myself of such a pleasure.

MRS. MARLOWE.

We shall expect you as a frequent guest.

DR. CORNELL.

You shall not be disappointed, I assure you.

MARLOWE.

I don't approve of my wife doing the work, but it's so hard to keep servants nowadays. They come to us as green as the old sod, but after a few months, either the policeman on the beat has spoiled them or else some book agent or grocery clerk has taught them a frenzied finance beyond our means.

DR. CORNELL.

We have the same difficulty.— But I envy you, Marlowe. The servant problem is most fortunate in your case.

(Mrs. Marlowe shows pleasure.)

MARLOWE.

(To Doctor Cornell as he offers cigars.)

Have a cigar.

DR. CORNELL.

Thank you.

(Takes a cigar and lights it. Marlowe also lights a cigar.)

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

Father, you ought to give the doctor a box of cigars after all the fine compliments he paid mother.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Offended.)

The doctor wasn't seeking reward.

(To Doctor Cornell.)

Were you?

DR. CORNELL.

(Smiles.)

Of course not.

DANIEL.

Mother, don't be so serious.

(Crosses close to her.)

I hope I haven't hurt you.

(Kisses her; regards her.)

You dear old mother.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Smiles upon her son and pats his cheek.)

My boy!

DANIEL.

(To Doctor Cornell by way of apology.)

Mother is always very serious upon my birthday.

DR. CORNELL.

(To Daniel.)

Mothers usually are. Birthdays remind them their children are gradually nearing the realization

of their own little household. And how they miss them!

(Marlowe and his wife regard each other understandingly.)

ETHEL.

Now don't you sermonize, father.

DR. CORNELL.

I won't, dear.

(To Mrs. Marlowe.)

(Lightly.)

I'm the most henpecked father in the whole world.

ETHEL.

(Affectionately.)

If I didn't henpeck you just a little, you'd say I was neglecting you.

DR. CORNELL.

(Smilingly.)

I give in, dear.

ETHEL.

Because you know I'm right.

DR. CORNELL.

Of course.

DANIEL.

Ethel, you have your father well trained.

ETHEL.

(To Daniel.)

(Banteringly.)

Wait till you see how I train the man I marry.

DANIEL.

(Chestily.)

Why refer that matter to me?

ETHEL.

Mr. Ego, I said wait and SEE. If you were the man, I'd have you in such doubt and despair you couldn't see. Smarty!

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

Oh!

(Doctor Cornell smiles good naturedly.)

MARLOWE.

(Takes book from table and offers it to Doctor Cornell.)

This is the book I spoke of at dinner.

DR. CORNELL.

Oh, yes.

(Takes book and fumbles for glasses.)

I've lost my glasses.

ETHEL.

Again, father?

DR. CORNELL.

I'll disappoint you this time, dear. I left them on the dinner table.

(Turns to exit right to go for glasses.)

ETHEL.

I'll fetch them, father.

(Starts to exit right.)

DANIEL.

(Crosses.)

I'll go, Ethel.

(Ethel stops.)

(Daniel indicates to Ethel by action she should go with him. She smiles coyly, regards Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe and her father and exits right with Daniel.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Tosses book on table.)

(Regards Mrs. Marlowe; to her.)

I can't get over the resemblance.

MARLOWE.

So you remarked several times at dinner.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Calmly.)

I'm always reminding people of someone else. I must be quite a common type.

DR. CORNELL.

No, no. Not at all.

(Regards Mrs. Marlowe.)

Strange how much you look like her.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Calmly.)

You certainly have aroused my curiosity. Who is she? An old flame?

DR. CORNELL.

(Smilingly.)

Oh, no!

(Seriously.)

A patient I met in the course of my early practice in Trenton.

(Reflectively.)

I've often wondered what became of her.

MRS. MARLOWE.

You seem concerned.

DR. CORNELL.

About her welfare, yes.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Won't you tell us about her?

DR. CORNELL.

(Is thoughtful a moment, then regards Mrs. Marlowe.)

I shouldn't have spoken of the resemblance. It wasn't very complimentary. You'll pardon me, won't you?

MRS. MARLOWE.

I don't understand.

(Marlowe indicates to his wife by action she should drop the subject.)

(To Doctor Cornell.)

Of course we'll pardon you, doctor.

(Doctor Cornell is thoughtful.)

(Daniel and Ethel enter right.)

ETHEL.

(Holds her father's glasses behind her back.)

You've lost them AGAIN, father.

DR. CORNELL.

(Thoughtfully.)

I can't imagine where ——.

ETHEL.

(Interrupts.)

"—— I could have put them."

(Laughs.)

That's what father always says.

(To father.)

Here they are.

(Produces and offers glasses to her father.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Takes glasses.)

(To Ethel.)

You're a terrible tease.

ETHEL.

(Places her face close to her father's.)

Is I?

(Kisses him.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Lightly.)

You sure is.

(Ethel laughs.)

(Doctor Cornell adjusts glasses to his nose, takes up book and glances over it.)

DANIEL.

Doctor, I guess you're very much like father.

DR. CORNELL.

(Looks up.)

How's that?

DANIEL.

Give father a book and a good cigar, and he's set for the night.

DR. CORNELL.

It beats theatres and cafés and tango dancing.

(To Marlowe.)

Doesn't it?

(Marlowe consents with a shake of the head.)

ETHEL.

Father included tango dancing, because he can't keep up with the new steps.

DR. CORNELL.

I'll admit they're inventing them a bit too fast for me.

(Puts book down.)

ETHEL.

(To her father.)

I really believe you're getting old.

DR. CORNELL.

As far as you're concerned, I don't forget I was young once myself.

ETHEL.

You're just a dear.

(Crosses to her father and gives him a hug.)

(Father and daughter stand with their arms about each other.)

DR. CORNELL.

(To Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe.)

If she had her way, she'd have me chasing to dances every night. I learned the so-called "Bear" just to please her. Then one night, when she had

me all primed to make a big hit, to my horror I learned the "Bear" was out of vogue.

(Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe smile.)

ETHEL.

And father was some bear.

(Looks up at her father smilingly.)

(Daniel is amused.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Lightly.)

(To Ethel.)

Now, now.

(Ethel laughs and crosses.)

DANIEL.

I can plainly see, the doctor is decidedly more interested in books.

(To Doctor Cornell.)

You should see father's library.

(Regards Ethel slyly.)

(To his father.)

Do show the doctor your library, father.

DR. CORNELL.

It would indeed be a pleasure.

MARLOWE.

Then come along, doctor.

(Crosses to exit left. Doctor Cornell also crosses left.)

DANIEL.

(Aside to his mother.)

Mother, as hostess you should accompany the doctor and father.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Innocently.)

How stupid of me!

(Daniel and Ethel regard each other and both seem amused and pleased.)

(Doctor Cornell and Marlowe exit left, followed by Mrs. Marlowe.)

DANIEL.

(Crosses to Ethel.)

That was easy.

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

(Somewhat seriously.)

But selfish.

DANIEL.

(Kisses her.)

So was that.

(They regard each other contentedly and seat themselves.)

(Seriously.)

They'll be back in a minute, so I'll have to work fast.

ETHEL.

(Puzzled.)

What do you mean?

DANIEL.

I'll be rather blunt and omit the frills you find in plays and books.

ETHEL.

(Suddenly enlightened but pretending innocence.)

I know! You're going to tell me a funny story.

DANIEL.

(Offended.)

(A drawl.)

Yes.

(Recovers his composure and decides to tease Ethel.)

Pat said to Mike——.

ETHEL.

(Interrupts.)

(Disappointedly.)

That isn't it at all.

DANIEL.

(Still teasing her.)

No. It was the story about Casey and Kelly.
Said Casey——.

ETHEL.

(Interrupts.)

(Peevishly.)

I'm angry.

DANIEL.

(Regards her tantalizingly a moment and laughs.)

Sure cure.

(Kisses her.)

(Regards her.)

Cured?

ETHEL.

(Looks up.)

(Drolly.)

Not exactly.

DANIEL.

(Smiles.)

Shall I tell you, Ethel?

ETHEL.

(Somewhat indifferently.)

Well?

DANIEL.

I want you to give me a birthday present.

ETHEL.

(All smiles again.)

Oh, I almost forgot! I've ordered the most beautiful smoking set for you.

DANIEL.

This is another kind of a present.

(He looks into her eyes; she in his.)

You!

(Ethel lowers her head and looks lovingly out of the corners of her eyes at Daniel. He regards her and she looks down.)

(Daniel takes a solitaire from his pocket.)

ETHEL.

(Looks up and forgetting herself, eagerly takes the ring from Daniel.)

(Elated.)

Oh! That's beautiful!

(She suddenly realizes her indiscretion, becomes embarrassed and drops the ring in Daniel's hand.)

(Daniel laughs.)

That isn't fair.

(She hides her head.)

(Daniel smiles at Ethel and places the ring on her finger.)

(Ethel slowly raises her head. They regard each other and Daniel embraces her.)

DANIEL.

(As though to himself.)

All fixed.

ETHEL.

I haven't said, "Yes."

DANIEL.

And you haven't said, "No."

ETHEL.

I might:

DANIEL.

If you do, I'll ——.

ETHEL.

(Interrupts.)

You would soon forget all about me and in a short time tell the next one, she's the only, only.

DANIEL.

That isn't very complimentary to yourself.

ETHEL.

Oh, I don't know! The divorce courts have long ago exploded the ancient idea that marriages are made in heaven.

(Regards ring.)

It is beautiful!

(Smiles upon Daniel, puts her arms about him and embraces him.)

Is your father's library very large?

DANIEL.

Why?

ETHEL.

I was just hoping the folks wouldn't come back, for a long, long time.

(Gives him a hug.)

DANIEL.

(Impulsively.)

I always thought the girl I'd marry would be just like that.

ETHEL.

That's wicked.

DANIEL.

Well, you started the hoping party and as an active member I shall see there's no dissension in our ranks.

(Hugs her tightly.)

ETHEL.

You're too rough.

DANIEL.

Which proves I'm an amateur.

ETHEL.

Then you're only pretending.

DANIEL.

I'm some pretender.

(Hugs her more tightly.)

ETHEL.

Don't!

(Breaks from him.)

I'll agree you're an amateur.

DANIEL.

(Smiles.)

We'll have to let everyone in on the secret right away.

ETHEL.

You must speak to your father and mother first. Perhaps they won't like me.

DANIEL.

You know they will. Of course I haven't told them of my intentions. But I will when you and your father leave, and then I'll come up and arrange matters with my father-in-law-to-be.

ETHEL.

(Impulsively.)

Tonight?

DANIEL.

I should say tonight.

ETHEL.

And you can go along in the electric when I take father to the lecture.

DANIEL.

(Enthusiastically.)

Fine!

(Thoughtfully.)

Oh say, Ethel, why not take the gas car and have the chauffeur drive?

ETHEL.

You surely are a wicked child.

DANIEL.

(Smilingly.)

Which means it shall be the gas car.

(They regard each other happily.)

(Reflectively.)

Ethel, I know a lot of "boobs" who are batching it. They go out one night with this girl and the next with that one, with a night at the club thrown in now and then, and they really think they're living.

ETHEL.

If they all had your eyes, Dan, I'd be a wonderfully popular girl.

DANIEL.

(Looks off stage.)

The library fans are coming, Ethel.

ETHEL.

(Excitedly.)

I'll have to take this ring off.

(Starts to do so.)

DANIEL.

(Prevents her.)

No. It will be bad luck.

ETHEL.

But we don't want them to know, now.

DANIEL.

(Takes Ethel's arm and crosses with her to exit right.)

Come on. We'll have to figure this thing out.

ETHEL.

I might put on my gloves.

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

That's it! We'll put on your gloves.

(They smile happily upon each other and hurriedly exit right.)

(Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe and Doctor Cornell enter left.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Carries an ancient looking book in his hand and wears his glasses.)

Well do I remember this book. It was quite the rage some thirty odd years ago.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Nervously.)

It's very dusty.

(Offers to relieve the doctor of the book.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Takes out handkerchief.)

Not at all.

(Dusts book with handkerchief.)

There.

(Regards book.)

The most wonderful book of its kind I believe I have ever read.

(Opens book.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Nervously.)

You'll only soil your hands.

(Again offers to take the book.)

DR. CORNELL.

It's perfectly all right.

(Brushes hand over book.)

(Shows hand.)

See?

(Opens book. Stops at fly page with a start.)

(Reads excitedly.)

Mary Sanders!

(Looks up at Mrs. Marlowe. To her.)

You knew her?

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Excitedly.)

Yes, yes! That's why I was interested when you spoke of her!

DR. CORNELL.

But I didn't mention her name.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Excitedly.)

No, no! I guessed it! She often referred to you; of the way you befriended her!

DR. CORNELL.

(Regards Mrs. Marlowe quizzically.)

You!

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Very excitedly.)

I do resemble her! I admit that!

DR. CORNELL.

Your actions betrayed you from the moment I took this book.

MRS. MARLOWE.

I knew what it would mean when you saw the name; how difficult it would be to convince you of your error. For my boy's sake, I did not want you, even for a single moment to think that I —. Don't you realize what it would mean to him? You're quite wrong.

(To husband.)

Isn't he, Oliver?

MARLOWE.

Of course.

(To Doctor Cornell.)

(Coolly.)

My wife's maiden name was Merrel, not Sanders. She knew the woman you speak of, knew her quite well, years ago. The resemblance between them was quite marked, so marked in fact they were frequently taken for each other. Why, only last year a total stranger to my wife made the same mistake you are making now.

DR. CORNELL.

(Slowly and thoughtfully.)

It can't be possible that I —.

(Stops and regards Mrs. Marlowe.)

(Reflectively.)

I must confess it's some thirty odd years since I saw this woman.

MARLOWE.

(Coolly and quickly.)

She was perhaps twenty, then. Women change a great deal between that age and fifty, doctor.

DR. CORNELL.

(Thoughtfully.)

That's true.

(Regards Mrs. Marlowe.)

The resemblance is wonderful.

(He is thoughtful a moment.)

I trust you'll pardon me.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Greatly relieved.)

Gladly, doctor.

DR. CORNELL.

(To Mrs. Marlowe.)

(Still thoughtful.)

So you knew her? Have you heard anything of her since she left Trenton?

MRS. MARLOWE.

Not a word. She seems to have dropped completely out of sight.

DR. CORNELL.

Strange, isn't it? Over thirty years since she's been heard from, and yet we sometimes say it's a small world after all.

(Daniel and Ethel enter right.)

(Ethel wears her gloves.)

ETHEL.

Father, I thought you'd never finish inspecting Mr. Marlowe's library.

DR. CORNELL.

(Lightly.)

Daniel must be a terrible bore.

ETHEL.

He isn't very strong for the women, father.

DR. CORNELL.

For the WOMEN. I can plainly see that.

DANIEL.

(To Doctor Cornell.)

Now I know you and I will get along famously.

DR. CORNELL.

(Abruptly.)

How's that?

DANIEL.

(Embarrassed.)

Oh, well,—you're so congenial.

(Ethel laughs.)

DR. CORNELL.

Thank you.

ETHEL.

I'm all ready, father. You have only an hour to prepare for your lecture.

DR. CORNELL.

(Consults watch.)

Goodness! I'd forgotten all about the time.

(Crosses and takes up hat and cane.)

ETHEL.

(To Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe.)

You must come and see us soon.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Thank you. We will.

ETHEL.

(To Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe.)

We'll expect you.

DR. CORNELL.

(To Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe.)

I am glad to have met both of you. I wanted to come long ago, but I have been terribly busy.

MARLOWE.

In future, I trust it shall be pleasure before business.

DR. CORNELL.

Yes, yes. To be sure.

(To Mrs. Marlowe as he takes her hand.)

Again I congratulate you on the dinner.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Thank you.

DR. CORNELL.

(To Mrs. Marlowe.)

Good night.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Good night, doctor.

DR. CORNELL.

(To Marlowe.)

Good night, Marlowe.

MARLOWE.

Good night.

(They shake hands.)

We must have a real book fest soon.

DR. CORNELL.

By all means.

(To Daniel.)

I trust you may see many more birthdays and that each shall find you as happy as this one.

DANIEL.

Thank you, doctor.

(Looks slyly at Ethel.)

This is the best birthday yet.

(Ethel shows pleasure.)

(Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe cross to center exit with Doctor Cornell.)

ETHEL.

(Crosses to Daniel.)

Don't be late.

DANIEL.

I won't. Have your father in good humor.

ETHEL.

I'll argue with him and give in.

DANIEL.

That will make him suspicious.

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

I'll tell him the "Bear" is again in vogue.

DANIEL.

That will be better.

(Ethel crosses and exits center with her father.)

(Crosses to his mother.)

It was a fine little party, mother.

MRS. MARLOWE.

I'm glad you enjoyed it, Daniel.

DANIEL.

Oh, I did! But the best part of it is a secret.

MRS. MARLOWE.

A secret?

DANIEL.

I have some wonderful news.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Tell me, Daniel.

DANIEL.

How do you like Ethel?

MRS. MARLOWE.

She seems a fine girl.

DANIEL.

(To his father.)

How do you like her, dad?

MARLOWE.

(Suspiciously.)

What's on your mind, Dan?

DANIEL.

I suppose you've guessed it. Ethel and I are to be married.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Excitedly.)

No, no! You mustn't!

DANIEL.

Why, mother!

MARLOWE.

You startled her, Dan.

DANIEL.

(Crosses to his mother.)

I'm sorry, mother.

(Regards her.)

Surely you don't object?

MARLOWE.

You're just beginning in life, Dan.

DANIEL.

Father, I want the girl I marry to strive with me, so that when I attain big things, as I hope to do some day, she and I can look back and proudly say we had an equal share in the success that came.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Has recovered her composure somewhat.)

That's all very well, Daniel, but Ethel is accustomed to all the good things of life. Sentiment will not buy them.

DANIEL.

Mother, to hear you talk, one would think I was a ten dollar a week clerk. I'll admit I started in a much smaller way, and I'm proud I did, but I'm making two hundred a month now and have a couple thousand dollars in the bank.

MRS. MARLOWE.

That won't go very far, Daniel, when you're buying tango gowns and imported hats and paying living expenses.

DANIEL.

If I thought Ethel, even for a single moment, was in doubt as to whether we could get along on my finances, I wouldn't give her a second thought.

She loves me, mother, I love her, and two hundred a month with love as the banker, means a savings account that puts a thousand a month without love to shame.— Why, I'll wager you and father started on a two figure a month income. Now didn't you?

MARLOWE.

Times were different then, Dan.

DANIEL.

Perhaps, but love is the same little busy body, and finds the way as easily now as in your courtship days.

MARLOWE.

Romance without the practical side doesn't work out, Dan.

DANIEL.

What in the world is the matter with you and mother, anyway? How much of an income do you think a fellow needs to be married nowadays?

MARLOWE.

We will not discuss the matter further, Dan.

DANIEL.

That isn't fair, father.

(Thoughtful a moment.)

I see. You object to the girl.

(To his mother.)

Is that it, mother?

MRS. MARLOWE.

I don't know Ethel very well, but she seems very nice.

DANIEL.

And wouldn't you like to see me marry her?

(Crosses close to his mother.)

Wouldn't you, mother?

MRS. MARLOWE.

If you loved her, Daniel. You may now but at your age a young man's ideas sometimes change rather suddenly.

MARLOWE.

Better wait a while, Dan. Wait at least a year to think it over.

DANIEL.

(Impulsively.)

A year! Why this is a serious business with me.

I might swear off smoking or drinking but wait a whole year, twelve months for Ethel and only because I don't happen to be a bank president or a street car magnate or the owner of a brewery! It's absolutely ridiculous and what's more, I don't believe either one of you is at all serious about your objections.

MARLOWE.

We are, Dan. Quite serious.

DANIEL.

I believe you framed this all up just to find out how I stand. Why, you haven't advanced one real, plausible objection in all you've said.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Crosses close to Daniel.)

Daniel, please do as we ask. Respect our wishes. Stay with us, with your father and me.

DANIEL.

(Brightens.)

Oh, now I understand! I should have guessed it, after the doctor explained why mothers are usually sad on their children's birthdays. I won't give you a chance to miss me. I'll see you every day.

(Crosses to center exit.)

I've got to hurry to see the doctor.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Excitedly.)

No, no! Please!

DANIEL.

(Stops; turns.)

We'll live near you, mother.

(Moves again toward exit.)

MARLOWE.

(Calls.)

Dan!

DANIEL.

(Stops; turns.)

We'll live next door to you.

(Crosses to center exit.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

No, no!

DANIEL.

(Stops; turns at exit.)

We'll live here, in the same building.

(Daniel hurriedly and happily exits center; Mrs. Marlowe crosses excitedly to center exit, calling "Daniel," and Marlowe stands at the center of the stage regarding his wife.)

AS
THE
CURTAIN
FALLS.

ACT II.

Library in the Cornell home.

SETTING:

An elaborate library scene with the usual accessories about the room. Doors center, right and left and window back left.

(When the curtain rises, a whistle is heard outside. Ethel Cornell hurriedly enters door right, eagerly crosses to window back left, peers out and waves her hand. She then exits door center and in a moment reenters with Daniel Marlowe. Ethel still wears her gloves.)

ETHEL.

My, you must have hurried!

DANIEL.

If I kept up this speed for a week, I'd join the angels.

ETHEL.

I shall always expect you to be as punctual as you are now.

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

A mere husband act like an affinity? Impossible!

(Laughs.)

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

(Lightly pretends she is disappointed.)

So after we are married, you'll be just like the rest, your real self.

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

I can't keep up a bluff forever.

(Smiles.)

ETHEL.

And you may have a terrible temper, and talk in your sleep, and —.

DANIEL.

(Interrupts.)

I don't snore.

ETHEL.

(Teasing.)

You're touchy on that point, aren't you?

DANIEL.

I'll be frank, but don't tell a soul. Promise?

ETHEL.

(Smilingly.)

Yes.

DANIEL.

Mine is twenty horse and hits on all twos.

(They laugh.)

ETHEL.

Oh! — And you may have frightfully bad habits. Perhaps I'll have to reform you.

DANIEL.

Don't you mount me on a pedestal, with a halo and the rest of the trimmings, because someone may forget he has also lived in a glass house.

ETHEL.

So you've been really horrid?

DANIEL.

There's one consolation, Ethel. I may have lived one night as though it was the last, but when I awoke the next morning convinced IT was the last, I pulled up the emergency brake and reduced my speed.

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

I'm afraid I was altogether too lenient with you, Dan. I should have asked at least a month to consider your proposal. Then when you came and breathlessly awaited my answer, I should have refused. You would have pleaded with me, of course. You —.

DANIEL.

(Interrupts.)

Just a minute.

ETHEL.

Don't interrupt.—You would have told me what a wonderful success you would be with me to strive for, and how life without me would not be worth the trouble.

DANIEL.

(Teasing.)

You're not on speaking terms with yourself, are you?

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

(Continues.)

I would mention Tom, Dick and Harry, who proved their love by always insisting on taxis, so I wouldn't experience the discomfitures of stuffy, strap-hanging street cars.

DANIEL.

(Interrupts.)

Oh, come on, Ethel! Make up with yourself.

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

(Continues.)

I would mention that these boys send flowers weekly.

DANIEL.

Weakly. That's good.

(Laughs.)

ETHEL.

(Continues.)

I'd tell you how they always opened the program

for me at the theatre and in a thousand and one ways showed their great love —.

DANIEL.

(Interrupts.)

Two ways. Flowers and taxis.

(Laughs.)

ETHEL.

(Smiles.)

(Continues.)

— while you have not yet proven you really and truly care for me.

DANIEL.

(Lightly and comically.)

Isn't that too bad! Poor little girl!

(Laughs.)

Naturally, I'd plead for a chance to spend my money.

(Smiles.)

ETHEL.

(Laughs.)

Reluctantly I would grant it, and alas, innocent, unsophisticated Daniel would shower me with flow-

ers, and the poor taxi drivers would strike for shorter hours.

(Laughs.)

DANIEL.

After a year or so of frenzied finance to PROVE my love, I suppose I'd finally win you?

(Ethel laughingly shakes her head to indicate "yes.")

And we'd live on love for a long, long time, so's I could pay my courtship expenses.

ETHEL.

It's being done by the best families.

(Both smile.)

DANIEL.

You're some girl.

(Regards her affectionately.)

ETHEL.

(Contentedly.)

I'm glad you think so.

(They regard each other smilingly and happily and Daniel kisses Ethel.)

(Pause.)

DANIEL.

Do you honestly believe any fellows still fall for the affection system you mention?

ETHEL.

(Lightly.)

Thousands!

DANIEL.

I thought they were all dead.

ETHEL.

They are, in a way. Why, if one of them was with his Miss System and heard us talking, he'd giggle "boobishly" and turn to her and say: "Gee, I'm glad you're a regular girl."

DANIEL.

(Laughs.)

It's a wonderful system.

ETHEL.

With one serious drawback.

DANIEL.

What's that?

ETHEL.

The girls whose work isn't clever, die old maids.

DANIEL.

(Smilingly.)

You almost have me believing you're a past master.

ETHEL.

(Lightly.)

Perhaps I realized my shortcomings and reformed.

DANIEL.

(Smiles and crosses close to her.)

(With feeling.)

You're the dearest girl in — in Chicago.

ETHEL.

(Lightly.)

You almost said "the whole world."

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

Luckily I remembered you know I haven't traveled much.

(They smile.)

(Pause during which they regard each other.)

(Affectionately.)

You're the one girl for me. Why, you're dearer to me than tons of radium.

ETHEL.

(Disappointedly.)

That doesn't mean anything.

DANIEL.

(Jokingly.)

I thought it was a hot one.

ETHEL.

(Smiles faintly.)

(Somewhat peevishly.)

You know very well there aren't tons of radium.

DANIEL.

I meant if there were.

ETHEL.

(Lightly.)

Then I fear for your business sense.

DANIEL.

(Smiles.)

(Affectionately and seriously.)

I do love you, Ethel.

ETHEL.

(Regards him with deep feeling.)

(Impulsively.)

Don't get sentimental. It gives me goose flesh.

DANIEL.

(Puts his arms about her.)

(Lightly.)

I shall save you, dear.

(Kisses her.)

Transfusion of goose flesh.

(They laugh.)

(Daniel releases Ethel and regards her.)

(Seriously.)

I've always said the girl I'd marry would love me for myself. You're that girl. Why, you haven't asked me about my income or prospects or anything.

ETHEL.

(Smilingly.)

I'm not at all up to date, am I?

DANIEL.

It's quite a relief you're not, in that sense.

ETHEL.

Maybe I've looked you up in Bradstreet.

DANIEL.

Who's he, a politician?

ETHEL.

On that order. He makes a business of other people's money.

(They laugh.)

DANIEL.

(Somewhat seriously.)

But really, Ethel, don't you think you ought to know something about me, financially speaking?

ETHEL.

(Smilingly.)

Is it a very long story?

DANIEL.

Not so long now, but —.

ETHEL.

(Interrupts.)

I know. Daniel has been getting along fairly well, but after he has married poor, little me, a series of miracles will happen, one right after the other.

(Smiles coyly.)

DANIEL.

It sounds funny the way you put it.

ETHEL.

(Teasing.)

And of course it isn't a bit funny at all.

(Smiles slyly.)

DANIEL.

(Seriously.)

Just the same, a fellow is inspired by the girl he loves.

ETHEL.

I hope you will be, Dan, but I don't want you to make any rash promises because you and I are going to have a wonderful time, watching some of our married friends wait on the miracles they made themselves believe would surely occur after the ceremony.

(Smiles.)

DANIEL.

You couldn't be serious if you wanted.

ETHEL.

Oh indeed yes! I'd think of the questions father will ask you when you suggest the "I will" party.

DANIEL.

Do you think he'll be very inquisitive?

ETHEL.

He will want to know all about you from the time you were born.

(Smiles tantalizingly.)

DANIEL.

(Smilingly.)

Everything is clear to me.

ETHEL.

(Half seriously.)

You simply must make it clear to father, because I'd hate to admit his judgment is better than mine.

DANIEL.

(Chestily.)

Impossible! Your judgment has been perfect.

ETHEL.

I'll tell you one question father might ask.

DANIEL.

What's that?

ETHEL.

Have you ever been in love before?

DANIEL.

Shall I tell the truth?

ETHEL.

Of course.

DANIEL.

Thanks for the tip.

ETHEL.

(Regards him quizzically.)

Well?

DANIEL.

Well, what?

ETHEL.

Have you?

DANIEL.

Oh! You want me to tell you?

ETHEL.

Certainly. I intend to rehearse you.

DANIEL.

Why,—I don't think I need any rehearsal.

ETHEL.

I see! She turned you down.

DANIEL.

(Somewhat abashed.)

No, no. I mean there wasn't any she until —.

ETHEL.

I'm disappointed.

(Pretends she is.)

DANIEL.

You should be pleased.

ETHEL.

Indeed not! When my married girl friends rave about their wonderful heart-breaking husbands and mention the many girls who were crazy about them, I'll have to be a mere listener, and they'll think I drew a sure-enough lemon.

DANIEL.

If it's as bad as all that, I'll go through some of my letters and see if I can't stir up a few alibis.

ETHEL.

It isn't at all necessary to have a lot of mush talk in writing.

DANIEL.

No?

ETHEL.

Not at all! If any girls called you up or told you they had a pleasant evening or asked you to come soon again, that would pass muster as a love unreturned in a buzz talk by wives about their husbands.

DANIEL.

If that's the case, I'll get a city directory and leave the rest to you.

ETHEL.

(Mimically.)

Which means that Daniel was very, very popular.

DANIEL.

No. As long as your imagination will be so fertile, I might just as well keep my conscience clear.

ETHEL.

Very well, then. You shall be and forever remain a real lemon.

(Looks off stage right.)

Here comes father. Ethel begs to be excused.

(Starts to cross to exit left.)

DANIEL.

(Takes hold of her arm.)

No, you don't.

ETHEL.

It isn't at all proper that I remain.

DANIEL.

Exceptions to all rules.

(Releases her arm.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Enters right.)

Hello, Daniel.

(Notices that Ethel is still wearing her gloves.)

Whatever is your idea in keeping your gloves on, dear?

DANIEL.

(Teasing.)

It's a new fad, doctor.

(Regards Ethel tantalizingly.)

ETHEL.

(To her father.)

Daniel was so very interesting, I forgot all about them.

(Regards Daniel laughingly and unbuttons left glove.)

DANIEL.

(Quickly and anxiously.)

Better start on the right one, Ethel.

ETHEL.

(Teasing.)

I have this one unbuttoned.

DANIEL.

(Anxiously.)

I'll button it for you.

(Offers to do so.)

DR. CORNELL.

What in the world is it all about?

ETHEL.

(A sly twinkle in her eye.)

You're acting terribly queer, Dan.

(Laughs at Daniel while she is busy, slowly removing glove.)

DR. CORNELL.

(To Ethel.)

Have you some joke on Daniel, dear?

ETHEL.

(Laughingly.)

Oh, no, father!

(Smiles at Daniel as she takes off glove.)

(Daniel hurriedly and comically crosses between Ethel and her father so the doctor cannot see the ring on Ethel's finger.)

(Ethel unbuttons and starts to remove the other glove.)

DR. CORNELL.

(To both.)

Now tell me what it's all about.

(Ethel removes right glove.)

DANIEL.

(Falteringly.)

Well, you see, doctor, Ethel and I have talked matters over and —.

(Stops abruptly and steps back so Ethel is in full view of her father.)

(To Ethel.)

(Firmly.)

I dare you!

ETHEL.

You're so brave, Dan, I really believe the Lions' Den story was named after you.

(Smiles happily.)

(Ethel and Daniel regard each other.)

DANIEL.

(Crosses with Ethel before the doctor and presents her hand so the doctor sees the ring.)

That's the result of our talk.

DR. CORNELL.

(Seriously.)

Oh, I see!

(Regards ring.)

(Lightly.)

As usual Ethel got the better of it.

(Daniel and Ethel smile contentedly.)

DANIEL.

(Bravely.)

The only thing that worries us, doctor, is, are you going to turn Bull Moose and spoil the party?

DR. CORNELL.

(Smiles.)

(Lightly.)

It would be cruel to deprive Ethel of such a beautiful ring.

ETHEL.

(Lightly.)

Engagement rings are never returned, father.

(Smiles slyly upon Daniel.)

DANIEL.

(Regards Ethel.)

(To the doctor.)

Is it all right, doctor?

DR. CORNELL.

(To Daniel.)

(Seriously.)

Do you think you will make her happy?

ETHEL.

(Crosses close to her father.)

(With feeling.)

Of course we'll be happy, father.

(Puts her arms about her father. He embraces and kisses her.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Has his arm about his daughter as he turns and speaks to Daniel.)

You must take good care of her, Daniel. She's all I have.

(Shows emotion.)

ETHEL.

(With deep feeling.)

Father!

(Regards her father and places her head upon his shoulder. She looks up, regards him again and kisses him. The doctor releases his daughter and gently passes her to Daniel.)

(Ethel and Daniel embrace.)

DANIEL.

(His arm about Ethel.)

(To the doctor.)

I'll watch over her and love her always.

DR. CORNELL.

God bless you both!

(A pause during which Ethel shows an effort to keep the tears back.)

ETHEL.

(With a sigh; to Daniel.)

Dan, say something funny, so I'll laugh before I cry.

DANIEL.

(Lightly and comically.)

Don't cry, dear. Please don't cry.

ETHEL.

That's silly.

(Smiles.)

DR. CORNELL.

(To Daniel.)

Now I understand why you planned the birthday dinner, and insisted upon my being there. That was cleverly arranged, Daniel. Did your father and mother suspect? Were they surprised at your engagement?

DANIEL.

Surprised? They were completely dumbfounded.

DR. CORNELL.

You don't tell me! You'd think they'd be prepared for something of the sort in view of your attentions to Ethel. Were they pleased?

DANIEL.

Well, you kind of upset mother with your remark about mothers missing their children when

they're married. Of course I don't blame you. You know how mothers are.

ETHEL.

(Seriously.)

Dan, I don't understand.

DR. CORNELL.

Surely your mother didn't object.

DANIEL.

In a way, yes. But it was all pretense to keep me with her.

DR. CORNELL.

What did she say?

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

She didn't think my income sufficient to buy tango gowns and imported hats.

(To Ethel.)

As though we couldn't get along.

ETHEL.

(Relieved.)

Then your mother doesn't dislike me?

DANIEL.

Of course not, dear.

(To the doctor.)

Please don't tell father and mother I said anything about it. Why, their team work was really sad, and yet they expected me to fall in line with their views. It really was funny.

(Smiles.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Seriously.)

So your father also objected?

DANIEL.

Of course he sided with mother and only further upset her. But I wouldn't exactly say they objected, doctor. They merely talked about nothing and expected me to make something out of it.

(Notes the doctor's serious and thoughtful expression.)

Cheer up, doctor. You'd think we were planning a funeral, instead of a wedding.

(Regards Ethel and notes she is also serious.)

For goodness' sakes, Ethel, don't you get to moping. It doesn't become you at all.

ETHEL.

I'm so unhappy, Dan.

(Regards her father and hurriedly crosses to him and puts her head on his shoulder.)

Father!

(Looks up at him.)

I just feel there's something wrong.

DANIEL.

(To Ethel.)

There you go with that woman instinct theory. I knew a girl who thought she could feel when her husband was untrue to her. She felt it and accused him so often he finally decided to try her out, just to see if there was anything in it, and she didn't get him at all. I tell you this instinct business is no good.

ETHEL.

(Smiles, then regards Daniel half smilingly.)

(To Daniel.)

You're just making that up.

DANIEL.

It's the gospel truth.

(Smiles.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Is thoughtful a moment, then speaks to Ethel.)

Now you run along, dear. I want to have a talk with Daniel.

ETHEL.

(Worried.)

(Crosses to her father.)

Father!

DANIEL.

It's all right, Ethel. After your short rehearsal, I feel perfectly fit.

(Daniel smiles, and Ethel regards him rather seriously.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Regards his daughter as he pats her cheek.)

We won't be long, dear.

(Ethel regards her father, then Daniel and exits right, a serious expression upon her countenance.)

(Daniel regards the doctor quizzically.)

Tell me all about it, Daniel.

DANIEL.

About what?

DR. CORNELL.

Your talk with your parents.

DANIEL.

I don't believe I can add anything to what I have already told you and Ethel.

(Notes the doctor's serious and thoughtful expression.)

You're taking the entire matter as seriously as though you were deliberating about an operation which meant life or death.

DR. CORNELL.

Your parents, I believe, questioned your ability to support Ethel. Isn't that right?

DANIEL.

Well, yes; but —.

DR. CORNELL.

(Interrupts.)

What is your income?

DANIEL.

Two hundred a month.— That's plenty to start on, don't you think?

DR. CORNELL.

Mrs. Cornell and I started on one quarter of that, and saved a little besides.

DANIEL.

And I'll wager father and mother started in about the same way. That's what I told them but they said times had changed. That's really funny as an argument against marriage, don't you think?

DR. CORNELL.

Hearts beat just as true, and gladly and willingly make as many sacrifices today as ever before. I shall be charitable and say that anyone who does not believe that, is either a confirmed bachelor or a jilted lover.

DANIEL.

That's a good one on father.

(Laughs.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Seriously.)

What else was said, Daniel?

DANIEL.

That's all I remember. So you see what a fine chance they had convincing me they were really in earnest.

DR. CORNELL.

If Ethel loves you as I am sure she does, half your income is more than sufficient. So you see, Daniel, your parents have really cast a reflection upon the nobler sentiments and finer instincts of my daughter.

DANIEL.

I am sure they had no such intention, doctor. They were merely upset, that's all. I'm really to blame for not preparing them for the news. But everything will be all right. I told them before I left we'd live near them, in the same building if necessary.

DR. CORNELL.

What did they say to that?

DANIEL.

Well, they didn't have much of a chance to say anything.

DR. CORNELL.

What do you mean?

DANIEL.

I didn't want to be late in coming to talk to you.

DR. CORNELL.

You came here while your parents were still protesting?

DANIEL.

Yes. But suppose they do think I need a larger income. That shouldn't matter as long as Ethel and you are satisfied. Now should it?

DR. CORNELL.

I wouldn't want you to displease your parents.

DANIEL.

But I won't. The only thing that really seems to bother them is my ability to make both ends meet, and it's a simple matter to convince them I can do that. So what's the use of worrying and fretting over an imaginary obstacle. Besides, I'm of age and a young man ought to decide some things for himself.

DR. CORNELL.

How old are you, Daniel?

DANIEL.

Twenty-eight last March.

DR. CORNELL.

(Reflectively.)

Last March?

(To Daniel.)

How long have you lived in Chicago?

DANIEL.

Twenty-seven years.

(Lightly.)

Naturally I don't remember back that far myself.

(Smiles.)

DR. CORNELL.

Where were you born?

DANIEL.

I really can't tell you. Father and mother are not much on this family Bible idea.

DR. CORNELL.

Since you are the only child, I should think they could easily remember the place of your birth.

DANIEL.

I've told them that myself, but somehow they always evaded a direct answer. As a matter of fact I thought I was born in Chicago until an old aunt of mine told me otherwise, and father never forgave her. Guess he wanted to boast of me as a Chicago product. But what difference does that make? Why do you ask?

DR. CORNELL.

(Has become very thoughtful since Daniel's last answer.)

(Very thoughtfully.)

A great deal of criticism is being launched against parents in these hygienic days for allowing their daughters to wed without first looking up the health of the prospective bridegroom. Some states have even gone so far as to require a doctor's certificate. As a member of the medical profession, I would indeed be very lax if I did not make some inquiry.

DANIEL.

I can't see that age and place of birth bear on that point at all.

DR. CORNELL.

There is such a possibility. For instance, if you were born and lived for a time in a very high altitude, and then removed to a low altitude, a distressing effect upon your heart action might result.

DANIEL.

(Laughs.)

That's funny. I don't look unhealthy, do I, doctor?

(Smiles.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Seriously and thoughtfully.)

The outward appearance of a person is not always a criterion of the condition of the machinery, so to speak. In my practice I have known a great many young men who appeared rugged and wiry, and yet were afflicted with severe cases of heart trouble.

DANIEL.

(Lightly.)

You're joking.

(Smilingly regards the doctor and notes his serious and anxious expression and becomes somewhat sober himself.)

Well, if you think there's any heart disease in my system, I want you to satisfy yourself this very minute.

(Starts to roll up right sleeve.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Anxiously and eagerly.)

The left one, the left one!

DANIEL.

Just as you say.

(Rolls up left sleeve.)

DR. CORNELL.

(Excitedly and anxiously regards Daniel's left forearm and discovers a V-shaped birthmark above the elbow.)

(Very excitedly and in a whisper.)

My God!

DANIEL.

What's the matter?

(Regards the doctor who is very agitated and receiving no answer regards his arm.)

That's a birthmark. You're a doctor. You know that.

(Regards Doctor Cornell, who stands with head lowered and an expression of extreme pain upon his countenance.)

(Excitedly.)

You don't mean there's something wrong with me, that I've some serious disease?

(Again regards the doctor who still stands with head lowered.)

Don't stand there like that! Speak to me, say something! Anything!

(Crosses close to the doctor.)

I can't bear this suspense, the look upon your face! Tell me the truth!

DR. CORNELL.

(Unwillingly looks up at Daniel and regards him sadly.)

You must be a brave lad, Daniel.

DANIEL.

Yes, yes! Only tell me!

DR. CORNELL.

You will have to forget about Ethel and she likewise must forget about you.

DANIEL.

(Impulsively.)

You don't mean that! You can't! I must know why!

DR. CORNELL.

(Appealingly.)

Please, please, don't ask me anything further.

(Crosses close to Daniel.)

I'm sorry, Daniel. You and I shall always be good friends.

(Regards Daniel a moment and speaks with an effort.)

Good night, Daniel. Good night.

(Puts his hand upon Daniel's shoulder, holds it there a moment and tears fill his eyes as he removes his hand and turns away. The doctor then slowly crosses to door right, head lowered.)

(Daniel crosses a step or two after the doctor and is about to speak, when suddenly he stops abruptly, realizing argument is of no avail. He re-

gards the doctor a moment and then slowly and sadly crosses to center exit.)

(Doctor Cornell who has reached door right, turns and looks sadly after Daniel and Daniel exits center.)

AS

THE

CURTAIN

FALLS.

ACT III.

Parlor in the Marlowe home.

(The curtain rises upon an empty, darkened stage. Soon a light is seen in the hall, back center. Several times it disappears and flashes again. Finally "Bud" Mears, a man of about thirty-five years of age, enters door center. He holds a flashlight in one hand, a revolver in the other and for a brief period inspects the room. Suddenly and noiselessly, Daniel Marlowe enters door center. He has noticed the strange light from the outside and expects to find an intruder. Daniel, slowly and without sound creeps behind Mears. They grapple a moment and finally Daniel overcomes his opponent and gains possession of the revolver. He crosses back stage, left, and turns on the lights.)

(Daniel and Mears regard each other.)

MEARS.

(Sullenly.)

Well?

DANIEL.

I'll make short work of you.

(Crosses to telephone on table center.)

MEARS.

Main 13. That's the number.

DANIEL.

(Regards Mears.)

You're quite a philosopher.

MEARS.

(Sullenly.)

Go ahead. Call the bull, don't talk it.

DANIEL.

(Smiles in spite of himself.)

(Seriously as he takes up 'phone.)

A good stiff sentence may take some of the spunk out of you.

(Takes receiver off hook.)

(At 'phone.)

Hello.— Main 13.— Yes.

MEARS.

You're tying up the traffic with that sentence talk, pal. Before these here jail reformers got busy, it was tough on a guy to be sent over, but now, say,

it's as soft as puttin' the Democrats over with the Republicans and the Feds in the field.

DANIEL.

(At 'phone.)

Police headquarters? — The Morgue?

(Puts up receiver but still holds 'phone.)

MEARS.

Bet a skirt answered.

(Laughs.)

They can't keep a secret.

(Laughs.)

DANIEL.

(Smiles.)

(Takes up receiver.)

(At 'phone.)

Main 13, please.— Yes.

MEARS.

Got to prove it to you, eh, pal?

(Smiles cynically.)

DANIEL.

(At 'phone.)

(Angrily.)

Hello, hello, Central.—First you gave me the wrong number and now I get the busy signal.—Well, maybe it's busy and maybe it's more "rotten" service.—I don't want to talk to the manager. I've reported disconnections and wrong numbers and busy signals, until I'm ready to believe the whole darn company is deaf, dumb and blind.

(Bangs up receiver angrily.)

(A slight pause during which Mears regards Daniel in a cynical manner.)

MEARS.

You're puttin' on the wrong sketch, pal, just like a lot of guys do every day. 'Cause these gals are hello gals, don't give you no season pass to make it hot for 'em. It ain't human. They lose their mothers and old men and others they're dips about, just like the guys that bark at 'em. Maybe the gal you just chinned with, has used up all the embroidery at the office to-day, 'cause some one died or is sick, or 'cause some rich guy, with innocent lookin' calf's eyes, has been handin' her a post grad course in mush talk until she could smell the flowers at their summer home at Palm Beach, and just tipped it off he wouldn't come across with the diploma. I ain't

blamin' the men any more than the women when it comes to handin' out this Central Station stuff, pal. On my rounds of the shops, lookin' over the stock, I've seen many a swell dame read the general alarm to some overworked, half-starved, eight-dollar-a-week clerk, 'cause she didn't happen to have as much in her nut as the President of the home of the free and the land of the trusts. Then while the poor clerk was wishin' her old man hadn't died or her husband hadn't ditched her, or her mother hadn't lost her dough in one of them private banks, the swell dame would be feelin' so chesty over her line of suffrage gab, she'd go home and write a paper against cruelty to animals.

DANIEL.

(Crosses to Mears.)

I want to shake your hand, old fellow.

(Extends hand.)

You've taught me a lesson in humanity I shall never forget.

(They regard each other.)

MEARS.

That's all right. I ain't chargin' nothin'.

(Regards Daniel's extended hand, takes it and they shake hands.)

Guess the way I'm shootin' off, you'd think I was runnin' for office.

(Laughs.)

DANIEL.

(Moves a step back and regards Mears.)

You a burglar!

(Places Mears' revolver on table back left.)

MEARS.

'Tain't no miracle, pal, no more than I could say to some guys, you a preacher or you a temperance crank or you a husband or wife. I'll never forget the last time I went to church.

(Laughs cynically.)

Sounds funny, eh? Well, it's the goods. Felt so 'shamed of my success at my trade, I kind of sneaked in and flopped in a back seat where it was dark and no one could look me over. Knelt for some time, my hands over my face. Got a little nerve after a bit and looked up, and say, I wouldn't have missed what I saw for the combination of the biggest safe in town. In walks a guy with his head set back so far you'd think his Adam's apple would bust through the skin. They made some fuss over him, marched him up the center isle to the first row, with everyone lookin' at him like he was a regular matinée idol.

He sat there proud as hell durin' the service, and when the preacher tipped it off to the fans, he'd given five thousand bucks to the church, Mr. Ready Money swelled up till you'd think he was one of them German airboats.

(Laughs cynically.)

You can't guess where he got his roll.

(Daniel shakes his head to indicate "No.")

You'll laugh when I tell you.

(Laughs.)

Traffic in women.

(Laughs cynically.)

Imagine me a hard workin' burglar, takin' to a back seat, with that guy up in front, biddin' for a pass to heaven with the roll that sent thousands to hell!

(Laughs cynically.)

Think that gave me religion, pal?

(Laughs cynically.)

Think it gives crooks like me religion when we see guys that's been brought up in fine homes, and educated and everythin', forgettin' all about the reserve

clauses on right and wrong that's been slipped in their contracts? — Believe me there's loads of 'em runnin' loose with the wrong sign hangin' over their door. You know why, pal? It takes a good sized roll to keep up with the procession nowadays, and havin' the roll is the star little performer that gets all the applause. Why, I remember when a decent gal wouldn't go out with a gink old enough to be her dad. But they're marryin' 'em today, pal, 'cause a young guy that wants to be straight can't stand the pace. I'm not sayin' the whole world's bad. There's gals that's turnin' down glad rags and bank accounts for love, and there's guys passin' up a roll or fightin' off affinities every day. There's lots of good guys, pal. Why I know lawyers I wouldn't ask their fee in advance, I know booze spielers I'd trust in a distillery, and I know women I'd believe, even if I was married to 'em and suspected they was lyin'. But take it from me, pal, there's husbands I wouldn't trust in the Sahara Desert, and if I was married to some of the skirts I've seen floatin' around, I'd want 'em handcuffed, blindfolded and locked in a room without transoms and windows durin' my office hours.— And I'd want the one and only key to that room in my pocket.

DANIEL.

You're an odd character.

MEARS.

Character, hell! I'm a crook, that's what I am.

DANIEL.

I hope you're not proud of the fact.

MEARS.

Pride and me had a row before I was born.
Born! That's the woman in the case.

DANIEL.

What a funny name!

MEARS.

Funny, hell!

(Regards Daniel quizzically.)

Guess you didn't get me. Birth is what I mean.
Understand?

DANIEL.

No, I don't.

MEARS.

(Looks about the room.)

I'll tell you in parlor talk.

(Regards Daniel.)

They call me "Bud" Mears, but I ain't got a
name. See?

(Daniel nods "Yes" seriously.)

That's why I ain't puttin' on airs or pallin' with pride. I tried hard enough to be right, but the law gives such as me a knockout below the belt, and there ain't no one yellin' "foul," neither.

DANIEL.

You mean the law made you what you are?

MEARS.

When I came into the world I was labeled, wasn't I, labeled with a name that ain't spoken in polite society? Who in hell did it but the law?

DANIEL.

Your pseudo-parents were to blame.

MEARS.

You'll have to cut your speed on them forty-bucks-a-plate words, pal.—Guess you mean the guy that started me on my way, and the gal that ditched me at the end of the line. All right. Let's blame 'em. That ain't lettin' the law out, 'cause the law could make it right.

DANIEL.

And legalize free love.

MEARS.

A prize fight didn't put Reno on the map.

(Laughs cynically.)

And say. Free love and law have had such a fast little party the last forty years, the woods is full of dames that's been married and divorced so often, they can almost figure out they're their own mother. — And you're afraid to give guys like me a name so's we can be right?

DANIEL.

The law prevents no one, even you, from being an honest, upright citizen.

MEARS.

I thought you was due for some of that reform stuff, pal, but you're missin' the mark, tellin' me I should be a good guy, when I'm not. And what do you know about me, pal? You got to look into a guy's or a gal's heart to find out why they're bad, but you got to get there first and you can't get there by ridin' through the slums in a closed bus at a twenty-mile gait, or by actin' a nut, sittin' way off in a corner in a sporty café, drinkin' lemonade. You're talkin' about law, pal. Ever notice the first thing a guy or a gal let loose on a murder charge says: "The law's all right, the jury's all right, the whole world's all right." And if it goes against 'em, what then?

(Regards Daniel quizzically a moment.)

If you was a gardener, and the law made you dig your garden with a pitchfork, you'd holler like hell, wouldn't you? My case don't affect you, so it's easy for you to talk. I'm not hollerin', and I'm not blamin' the gal for ditchin' me when the law makes it a disgrace for her to come out in the open and tell the truth. If she'd got married the hour or second before I arrived on the landscape, you'd say it was all right, 'cause the law says so, eh, pal? That's funny.

(Laughs cynically.)

Oh, 'tain't goin' to do me no good if I could change the whole thing. I've had my hell, 'cause I learned to know what this no mother to guide her stuff means. You've been brought up with everyone lovin' you and tellin' you you're good. Maybe that's why you are. But me? I ain't had no mother to love me and teach me my prayers. If the law was different, maybe she'd stuck by me and loved me like your mother did. But she didn't. That's why I'm bad. I've missed the best there is, and ain't as good as a tree or a horse when it comes to figurin' me out. Why, when I was a kid goin' to school, I was marked from the start. You know how kids are. They get mad and fight and call each other bad names. Then they cool off and apologize and are good friends. But me? They wouldn't apologize to me 'cause they knew what I was, and I had to knock hell out of 'em to keep 'em quiet. But that didn't do me no good, pal, 'cause I was kicked

out of school. Got a job after that and worked hard 'cause I wanted to get on and it helped me forget. And I did kind of forget until at night when the closin' whistle blew, I saw how happy the other guys was to go to a regular home where there was love. And then on my way to my own two by four, I'd see happy kids in the cars in their mother's arms or walkin' by their mother's side in the street, and gee I felt bad! So I tried to make up for what I was missin' by readin' in books what mothers is like. When I was kind of workin' my mind into the idea, I tried to feel her kisses and love, but 'tain't real, that way, pal, 'tain't real.

(Shows emotion. After a moment Mears rubs his fists into his eyes and pulls himself together.)

Maybe you think I'm pullin' the soft stuff, so's you'll let me off. I'm ready, and I don't care if they send me up for life.

DANIEL.

Cheer up, old fellow.

(Takes card from pocket.)

I'll get you a position if you'll permit me.

(Offers card.)

Here's my card.

MEARS.

(Regards Daniel.)

I ain't dreamin'?

(Rubs hand over eyes.)

(Regards Daniel and takes card.)

DANIEL.

I mean it with all my heart.

MEARS.

Gee! You're goin' to get me a regular job?

(Daniel nods his head to indicate yes.)

(Mears regards Daniel and extends his hand.)

Shake.

(Daniel and Mears shake hands.)

(Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe enter right.)

(Daniel and Mears regard each other and Mears turns to cross to center exit, when he sees Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe.)

(Mears regards Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe and crosses down stage.)

Hell!

ACT III

III

MARLOWE.

Who is this man, Dan?

DANIEL.

(Regards his father, then Mears.)

A poor fellow, who hasn't had a chance.

MEARS.

You can't get away with that poor fellow stuff, pal, with me payin' my income tax.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(To Mears.)

Who are you?

MEARS.

I'm one of them guys that gives swell dames free advertisin' of phony jewelry as the real thing.

MRS. MARLOWE.

What is this ruffian doing here, Daniel?

MEARS.

Wastin' my time, mam. I'm a burglar.

MRS. MARLOWE.

A burglar!

(Shrinks back.)

MEARS.

(To Mrs. Marlowe.)

You got some white hope.

(Indicates Daniel.)

MARLOWE.

(To Daniel.)

Did you call the police?

MEARS.

They was busy.

(Laughs.)

MARLOWE.

(To Mears.)

I'll tend to your case myself.

(Crosses to telephone.)

DANIEL.

(Crosses and stands before his father.)

Please, father. You don't understand.

MARLOWE.

Understand? This man came to steal, didn't he?

DANIEL.

Yes. But he isn't a bad sort at heart and I've promised to secure him an honorable position.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Of all things!

MEARS.

(To Daniel.)

Don't boost me too much, pal. I might get to blushin'.

MARLOWE.

You intend to recommend a burglar? You must have lost your senses!

MRS. MARLOWE.

(To Daniel.)

I quite agree with your father.

MEARS.

(To Daniel.)

You're up against it, pal. The alienists agree.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(To Mears.)

You're perfectly insulting.

MEARS.

Thanks, mam. When a guy gets perfect at anythin', you got to hand it to him.

DANIEL.

He means no harm, mother.

MARLOWE.

We'll have no further argument about the matter.

(Takes up 'phone and is about to take the receiver off the hook when Daniel intercepts him.)

DANIEL.

Father. Just a minute.

MARLOWE.

I want to hear no more.

(Tries to take the receiver off hook, but Daniel prevents him from doing so.)

DANIEL.

This man hasn't had the same chance as you or I. He came into the world without——.

(Regards his mother.)

—— without a name.

MRS. MARLOWE.

Oh!

(Shows anguish and seats herself.)

(Marlowe is also affected and lowers his head.)

DANIEL.

He drifted about, like a ship upon the rocks, subject to the tide, and naturally it was mostly bad.

(Marlowe puts down 'phone.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

Please don't say anything further.

MARLOWE.

(To Mears.)

You may go.

MEARS.

(Brightens.)

Thanks.

(Looks puzzled and regards Marlowe, then Daniel.)

(To Daniel.)

Say, pal, you're the goods with that talk stuff.

(Crosses to center exit. When he nears the exit, he notices his revolver on table back left. He stops, and takes revolver up. Mrs. Marlowe screams and Marlowe shows fear but Daniel stands unaffected. Now that the excitement is almost over, he becomes very sorrowful, his thoughts being occupied with the purpose of his homecoming.)

(Mears holds gun in a tantalizing manner and laughs at Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe.)

(To Daniel.)

Guess I'll leave this as a souvenir, pal. Me for the straight and narrow, and starvation?

(Laughs cynically.)

Nothin' doin'.

(Places gun back on table and exits laughing cynically.)

DANIEL.

Poor devil! And yet he seems to be happy!

(Looks down sorrowfully.)

(Marlowe indicates to his wife she should go to Daniel.)

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Crosses to Daniel and puts her arms about him.)

My Daniel!

DANIEL.

(To his mother.)

When I left here tonight, I was so happy. But now.

(Mrs. Marlowe buries her head on Daniel's shoulder.)

(Daniel raises his mother's head gently and holds it erect, his hands pressed against her cheeks so that she looks into his eyes.)

Mother. Tell me.

(Mrs. Marlowe remains silent.)

MARLOWE.

What do you want to know, Dan?

DANIEL.

(Releases his mother and she crosses down stage and seats herself.)

(To his father.)

When I told you and mother I intended to marry Ethel, you raised a lot of silly objections. I went away, light hearted and gay, thinking you were merely trying to keep me at home. I spoke to the doctor, and he gave his consent to our marriage, until ———.

(The thought of the burglar comes over him and he is horrified.)

No, no!

MARLOWE.

What's the matter, Dan?

DANIEL.

(Controls himself.)

The doctor agreed until he saw ———.

(He is again horrified and hesitates.)

I can't say it! No, no!

(Gains some control over himself.)

—— saw that — that birthmark ——.

(Stops abruptly as horror completely seizes him.)

My God! The burglar!

(Mrs. Marlowe sinks in chair and covers her face with her hands and Marlowe stands somewhat stooped, deeply affected.)

(Daniel regards his parents with horror upon his face.)

That isn't it! It can't be!

(Regards his father and mother.)

Deny it, deny it, deny it!

(Neither parent answers.)

Then it's true! It's true! Oh!

(Covers his face with his hands.)

MARLOWE.

Yes. Your mother and I were sweethearts. We forgot ourselves one night and a few days later I was unexpectedly called away in the government service. When your mother learned the truth from Doctor Cornell to whom she appealed, she tried to reach me, but failed and before I returned ——.

When I came back, we were immediately married

and we've always loved you. That's why we've kept our secret.

DANIEL.

(An outburst.)

You loved me, yes! You must have loved me to bring me into the world, an outcast, deprived of my birthright! I'm no better than the poor devil who was here tonight! We're both among the living, not because that was the intention, but because of a moment of passion! And now, when I thought I would be happy, I find myself ——! Oh!

(Staggers back and puts his hand upon table back left for support, and touches the revolver Mears has left.)

(Takes up revolver.)

I hate you both! I ——!

(Levels revolver.)

(Ethel and her father enter center.)

(Ethel hurriedly crosses before Daniel.)

ETHEL.

Daniel!

(Reaches for revolver.)

Give me that.

(She takes the gun from him.)

I'm ashamed of you!

DANIEL.

You don't understand.

ETHEL.

Yes, I do. You were about to kill your parents. Your parents, I say, because they have been father and mother to you. They did wrong, that's true, but they have tried to make up for the wrong as best they could, by loving you and bringing you up with the fear of God in your heart, instead of snuffing out your life by an illegal operation, or by leaving you on a doorstep to fall into strange hands.

(Places gun on table.)

DANIEL.

(Regards Ethel and bows his head.)

(Regards his father.)

Forgive me, father.

(Marlowe indicates forgiveness by a nod of the head.)

(Daniel crosses to his mother and kneels beside her.)

Mother. I can't tell you how sorry I am.

MRS. MARLOWE.

(Slowly looks up and embraces her son.)

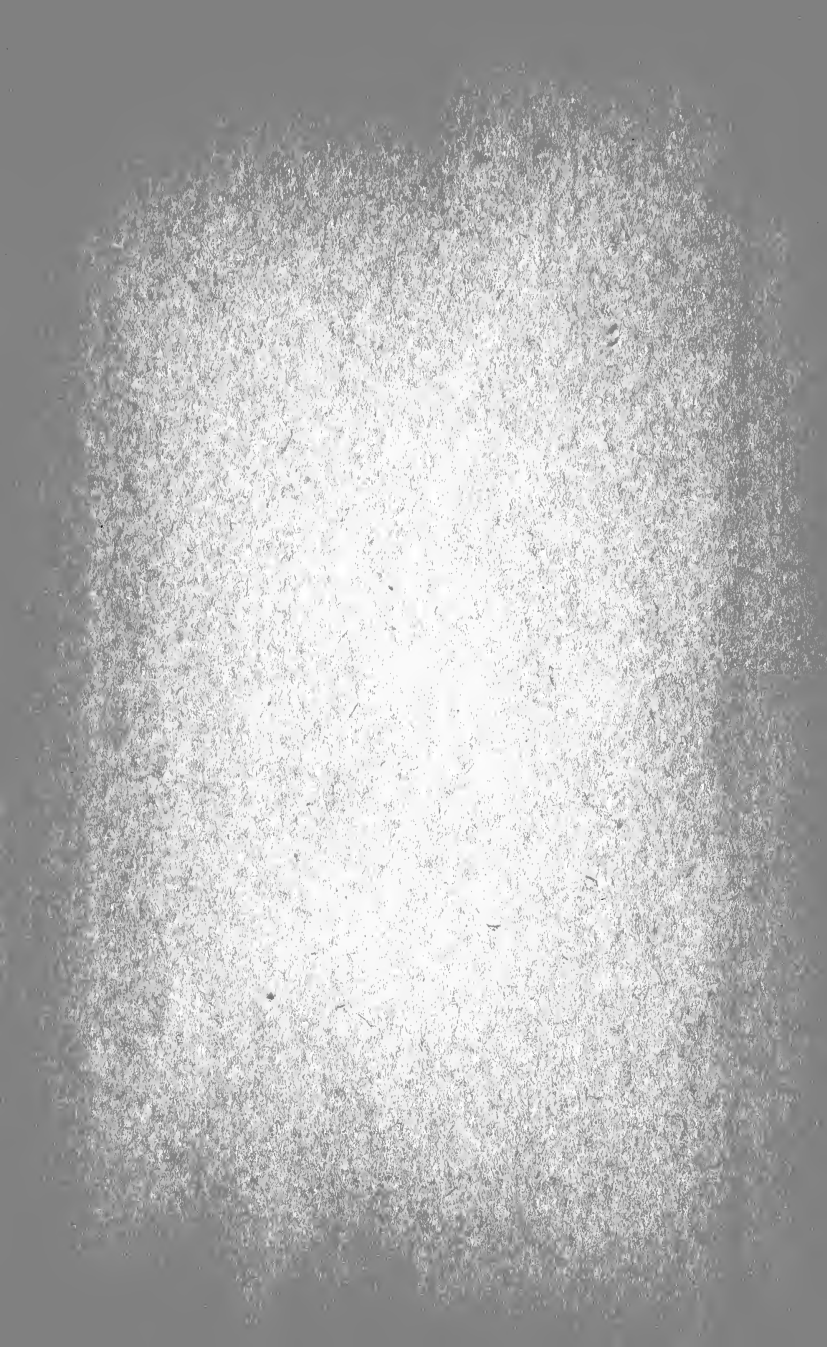
My boy!

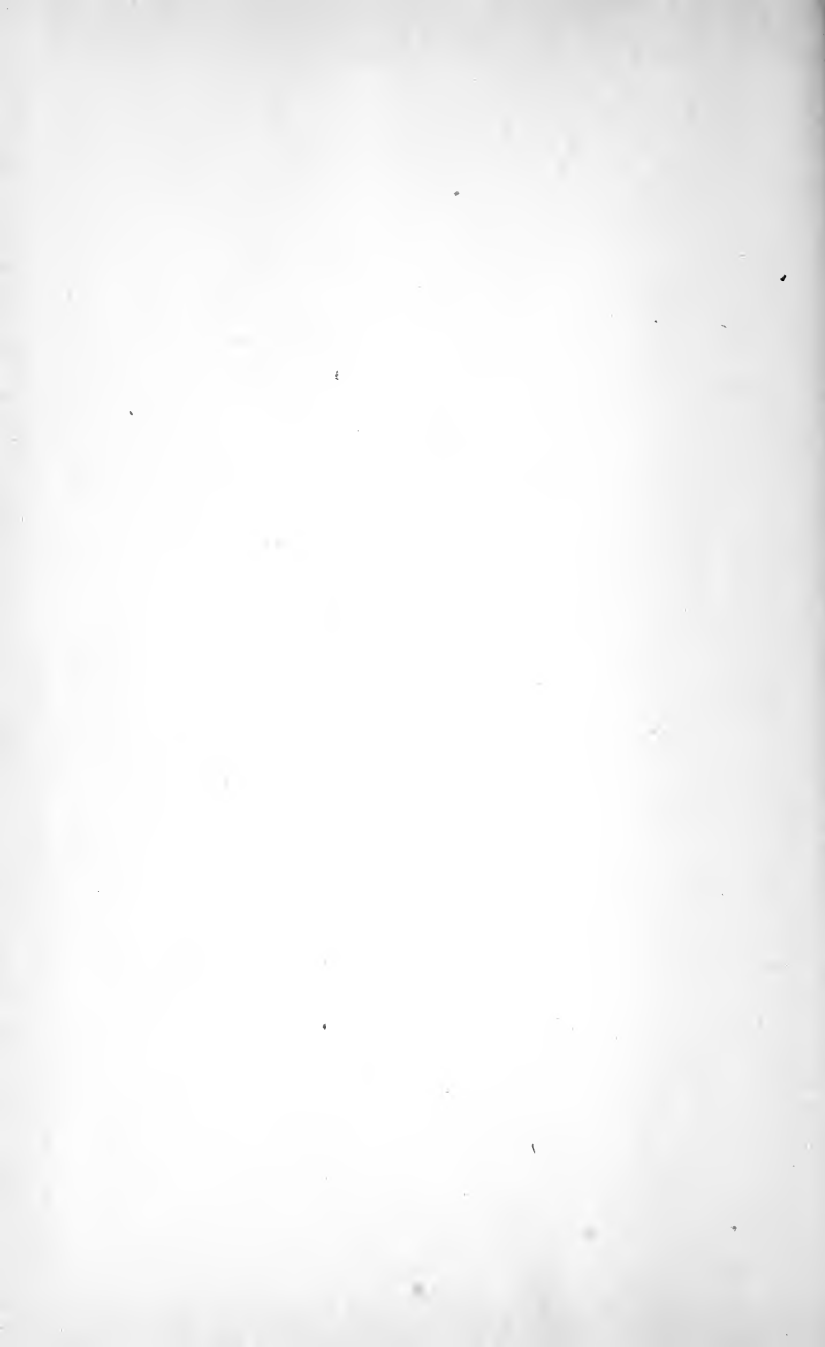
(Mrs. Marlowe has her arms about Daniel and lovingly regards him as he kneels beside her, and Marlowe, Ethel and Doctor Cornell look upon mother and son.)

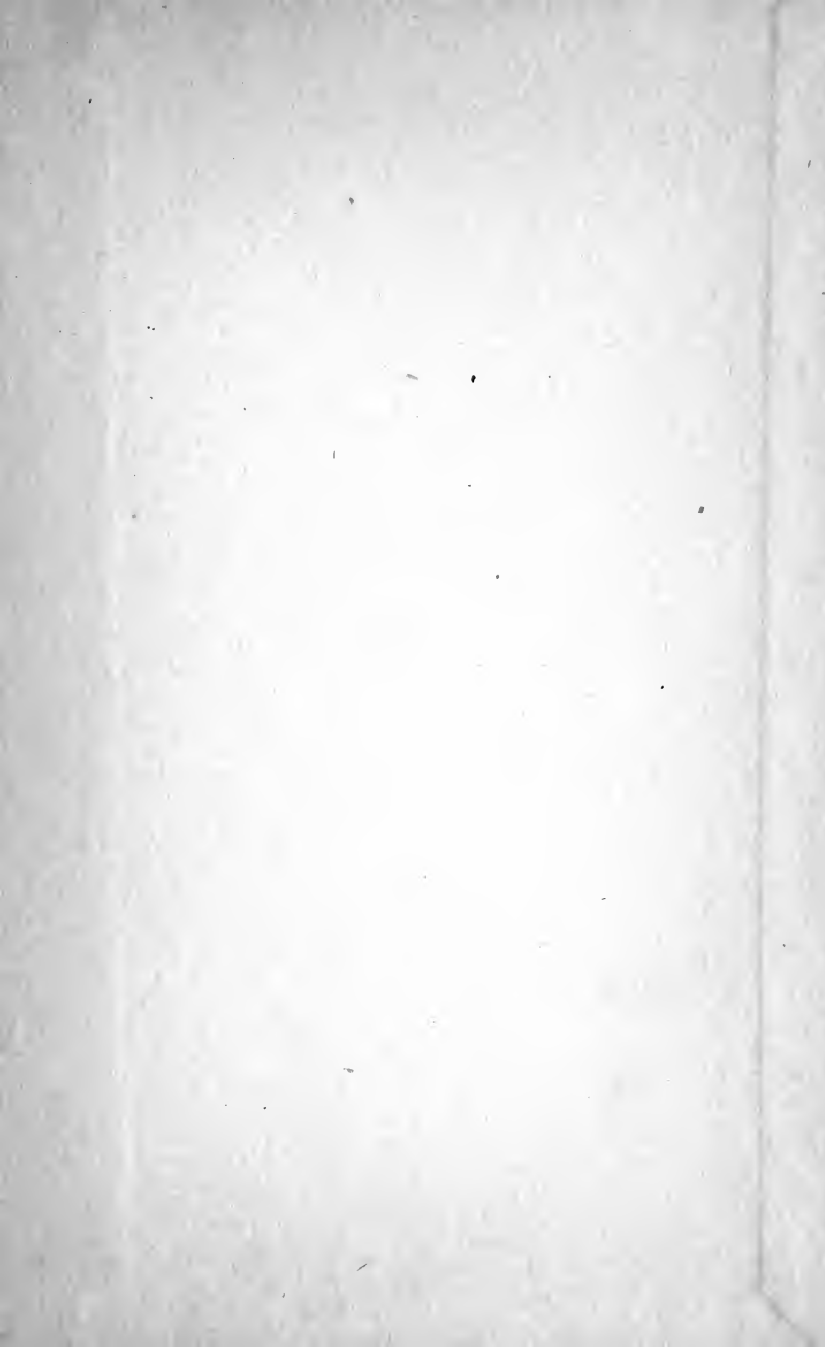
AS
THE
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